

Portrait of Anthony Wayne

BY
CHARLES HENRY HART

*Library of Congress
from the Author*



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Portrait of a man in military uniform, possibly a general, wearing a powdered wig and a coat with epaulettes. The image is a sepia-toned reproduction of an original painting.

ANTHONY WAYNE

ADDRESS

AT THE PRESENTATION OF

HIS PORTRAIT

TO

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA

ON BEHALF OF

MRS. JOSEPH W. DREXEL

MAY 9, 1910

BY

CHARLES HENRY HART



PHILADELPHIA

1911

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PORTRAIT OF ANTHONY WAYNE

BY CHARLES HENRY HART.

AT the annual meeting of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, held in its Hall on the evening of May 9, 1910, the President, Honorable Samuel W. Pennypacker, read the following letter from Charles Henry Hart, Esq.:—

PHILADELPHIA, May 4, 1910.

HONORABLE SAMUEL W. PENNYPACKER,

President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

MY DEAR GOVERNOR:—

It is with great pleasure that I am the medium for presenting to the society, on behalf of Mrs. Joseph W. Drexel, the important and valuable original portrait of General Anthony Wayne, painted from life, in 1796, by Henry Elouis. I learned that this portrait was in Washington, D. C., and knowing how desirable it would be for the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, brought it to the attention of Mrs. Drexel, who, in the most generous and charming manner, secured the portrait to hang upon your walls.

If agreeable to you I will make a formal presentation of the portrait at your annual meeting on May 9th. I am, with distinguished consideration, my dear Governor,

Faithfully,

CHARLES HENRY HART.

The President then introduced Mr. Hart, who said :

It is my high privilege and distinguished honor to present to you on behalf of Mrs. Joseph W. Drexel, a lineal descendant, in the third generation, from Thomas Wharton, the first Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, and a lady of keen historical instincts and an intelligent love of art, as rare as it is good, which are plainly evidenced by her gracious gift to-night, an original portrait, painted from life, of General Anthony Wayne, the most illustrious soldier Pennsylvania has given to the nation, and by leading authority considered the most eminent general of the Revolutionary War. This portrait was painted in the year that Wayne died, by Henry Elouis, a French émigré, and its existence was unknown to historical students until recently discovered by me in Washington, D.C. When I first saw this canvas it was in a deplorable condition, having been carelessly painted over until the original was almost lost to view, but all this foreign matter has been skillfully removed and the portrait restored to its original state, until now we have the most characteristic and interesting portrait of Anthony Wayne that exists. The type of face is generally similar to the portraits of Wayne painted by Charles Willson Peale, in the State House at Philadelphia, and by Edward Savage, in the New York Historical Society. But Peale and Savage show in their portraits Wayne's obesity as predominant, while the more artistic and deep seeing Frenchman has preserved the strong and clear cut features that speak commandingly for the man of force and action that we know Wayne to have been.

These three portraits of Wayne, by Elouis, Peale and Savage, differ wholly and entirely from the commonly familiar profile picture of him, in a cocked hat, called "the Trumbull portrait of Wayne." But the authenticity of this last named picture, as a portrait from life, is exceedingly doubtful. The original is at best a small miniature, about one inch in height, in a crowded group of American officers, in the painting by Trumbull, of the Surrender of Cornwallis, in the Yale Gallery of the Fine Arts, at New Haven, Conn.; and consequently all the engravings and life size paintings of Wayne, of this type, are merely enlarged copies of this supposed portrait, vamped up to suit the taste of the copyist, whether painter or engraver, and are, therefore, only ideal heads. It is well to bear in mind in considering this question, that there is no other and separate painting or drawing known by Trumbull, of Wayne; that the so-called Trumbull portrait of Wayne is found only in the grouped historical composition mentioned.

The identification of the authorship of the present portrait is most interesting. What may be called the scareest engraved American historical portrait is a large mezzotint, (17.14 x 13.13) by George Graham, that was published in Philadelphia, June 1, 1796, by Freeman & Co. It is of Anthony Wayne after this painting by Henry Elouis. Of the only two known impressions of this print, one is in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and before us to-night. In it Wayne is represented, as you will see, at three-quarter length, standing, in full uniform, with the order of the Cincinnati on the lapel of his coat. His right hand rests upon a parchment, marked "TREATY," on a table, while in his left hand he holds his sword at his side. Above the table is what appears to be a window or base, with column and curtain, upon which is a garlanded Indian pipe-of-peace. The canvas must have been painted between Wayne's coming to the East from his Indian campaign, in February, 1796, and his return to the North-west, in June of the same year, to take possession, for the United

States Government, of the posts at Detroit, Niagara and Presque Isle, from which he never returned, dying at Erie, Pa., on December 15, 1796. According to a certificate written by Colonel J. J. Abert, U.S.A., dated March, 1850, which is affixed to the back of the canvas, this portrait was painted for Major Caleb Swan, who was appointed Paymaster-General of the United States army a month later than Wayne was commissioned Commander-in-Chief, and who was very closely attached to Wayne. Major Swan died Nov. 20, 1809, leaving a widow, who was Colonel Abert's eldest sister, and one daughter. The widow Swan married W. W. P. Bryan of Philadelphia and the daughter became the wife of George Allan Magruder, U.S.N., when the portrait of Wayne was given to Colonel Abert, he having first seen it in 1808, at his brother-in-law's house in Washington, when seeking appointment as cadet to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Colonel Abert died in 1863, and the portrait passed to his son Mr. Charles Abert, who died in 1897, and it was sold in the settlement of his estate. As stated in the certificate, Colonel Abert did not recollect the name of the artist who painted the portrait, only that he was "celebrated"; and we learn who the artist was by his name upon the engraving, by Graham, before us.

Jean Pierre Henri Elouis or, as he called himself in this country, Henry Elouis, was born in Caen, France, January 20, 1755, and died there December 23, 1840. He was destined for medicine but he sought art and studied under the French painter Jean Barnard Restout, going to London in 1783, where three years later he won the Royal Academy silver medal for drawing of the human figure. He exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1785, 1786 and 1787 and at the beginning of the French Revolution emigrated to America, settling in Maryland, where Charles Willson Peale met him in 1791, at Annapolis, and, calling him "Mr Loise," mentions that "he paints in a new stile," querying sharply, "if this gentleman so cried up will do better than Mr. Pine

whose reputation was equally cried up.”¹ In 1792 Elouis removed to Philadelphia and his name appears in the Directories for 1793, “limner 201 Mulberry;” for 1794, “portrait painter 106 No. Front;” and for 1799, “miniatures 1 So third.” While in Philadelphia he gave instruction in drawing to Eleanor Custis and painted miniatures of Washington and of Mrs. Washington. Unfortunately his miniature of Washington is unknown to us, but a beautiful ivory of Mrs. Washington, by Elouis, is in the unique collection of miniatures belonging to Mrs. Drexel, your benefactor. In this connection the following letter from Elouis to Washington, preserved in the Library of Congress (Vol. 79, No. 101), is of particular interest. It is written from “No. 9, 8th Street at the Wax Works.”

“PHILADELPHIA July 20, 1793.

“Perhaps, Sir, you do not recollect my name? I teach drawing to Miss Custis. I have been recommended by Mrs. Stuart and I have had the honour last winter to take your likeness in miniatur. It is not entirely finished having been much disturbed and wishing to make a well finished picture I shall wait till my mind is in a more quiet situation.

“P. S. If you are pleased to favor my petition (for \$80), I shall cease from that instant to receive the two guineas per month that I receive for the lessons I give Miss Custis.”

The answer to this application is found, under the same date as the letter, in Washington’s Household Account-book, belonging to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania: “Sent to Mr. Elouis by the President’s order as a loan in consequence of application \$80.”

Filled with a spirit for adventure, Elouis travelled over the United States, Mexico and South America, making many explorations with Humboldt, and in 1807 returned

¹ Wharton’s *Heirlooms in Miniatures*, p. 100.

Portrait of Anthony Wayne.

to France, leaving behind him a great many pictures, "particularly at Havana and Philadelphia where he remained the longest. At Philadelphia particularly, he painted many of the illustrious persons of the Revolution, among others the celebrated Washington."² In 1811 he was made Curator of the Museum of his native town, which office he held until his death, at the age of eighty-five, a term of nearly thirty years. His portraits were noted for their simplicity and directness, qualities very apparent in the portrait of Wayne. Doubtless the "new Stile" that seems to have ruffled the equanimity of Peale was Elouis's realistic boldness and ruggedness of manner which was in strong contrast with Peale's somewhat mechanical smoothness in painting.

The portrait of Anthony Wayne, by Elouis, is unquestionably an original portrait painted from life, as it possesses every quality and requirement of a life portrait. As will be seen, it is of life size, in full uniform, but whether it has been cut down from a larger canvas showing the figure and details given in the engraving or whether the engraving is an elaboration of the bust portrait by the engraver, a not uncommon practice in making plates, we do not know, but, from its unusual size, 20 x 25 inches, I am inclined to think the former, particularly as the background, in the lower left corner, shows some detail meaningless in a bust portrait but which would be a part of the background of the larger painting. However this may be there can be no doubt but that the head and bust in the engraving are from this identical portrait and it can be accepted as the finest delineation of the captor of Stony Point and victor at Fallen Timbers that exists. One notable difference between the painting and the engraving will be observed. That is the absence of the order of the Cincinnati from the painting. A simi-

² Notice sur M. Elouis professeur de dessin de l'école communale et conservateur du musée de la villa de Caen. Par M. G. Mancel. Caen. 1841.

lar difference will be noticed in Savage's painted and engraved portraits of Washington and of Wayne as also in the portraits of some other Revolutionary characters. In the permanent painted portraits the order is omitted, while in the more ephemeral engravings it has been introduced. I will leave the solution of this problem to others, and the portrait of Wayne to you.

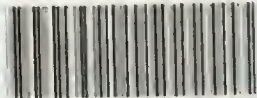
At the conclusion of the presentation the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the thanks of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania be extended to Mrs. Joseph W. Drexel for her important and valuable gift of an original portrait of Major General Anthony Wayne painted from life, in 1796, by Henry Elouis, and that in appreciation of said gift the Council of the Society be recommended to elect Mrs. Drexel an Honorary Member of the Society.

Subsequently Mrs. Drexel was elected an Honorary Member of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania by the Council.



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